

From Ambrosius Aurelianus to Arthur: the Creation of a National Hero in *Historia Brittonum*

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The 5th century witnessed the occupation of vast territories within Europe by barbarian invaders who led to the collapse of the Roman Empire and to the emergence of a new period in western civilization known as the Middle Ages. In order to attend to the defense of Rome from the siege of the Goths, the Romans abandoned Britain in 410. As a result, it was soon occupied by the Anglo-Saxons, who first set foot on the island in 449, apparently invited by the Celtic king, Vortigern. Yet, this invitation was not regarded with sympathy by the British and, as an ever-growing number of Saxons began to reach the British shores, inlanders tried hard to maintain the unwelcome guests far from their country. Conflicts between the Celtic British and the English Saxons lasted for an extended period of time, and went on even after the occupation of what is now England by the Saxons. These reorganized the territory into a heptarchy of seven kingdoms which would last until the Norman Conquest in 1066. The Celts who did not accept the new Germanic government fled to areas such as Brittany or Little Britain in France, or were pushed away to Wales, Scotland and Cornwall. However, in spite of their final defeat, the Celts cherished a special moment of national pride, during which they were the victors and when everything seemed to herald their strength and superiority. We are referring to the Battle of Mount Badon, also known as the Battle of Badon Hill, allegedly fought between 482 and 516. This conflict culminated with the Celts' astounding triumph over the invaders, who suffered a crushing defeat and great humiliation. Badon was, therefore, viewed as a huge British success which halted the Anglo-Saxons for some time, thus fostering patriotic feelings.

This battle is first mentioned by Gildas, a British cleric, who, in the 6th century, wrote *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* (*On the Conquest and Ruin of Britain*). In this work, he blames his compatriots for the countless battles, conflicts and disasters that overcame the British, claiming that their sins and corrupt behaviour, similar to those of the Children of Israel, had been the cause of the Germanic incursions and of the country's ruin. The invasion of the Saxons is, therefore, understood as a punishment sent from God to the British. These were doomed not to survive for long as a result of their cowardice and weak personality, which made them incapable of forming an organized army to fight back. By stating this idea, Gildas is, in fact, undermining British social and political structure.

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Gildas's text was of paramount importance both for the way the British came to identify themselves as a people, and the way the Saxons understood them. By providing such a negative image of the British, this text promoted the belief that this people had no social identity whatsoever, thus encouraging the formation of Anglo-Saxon society.

Gildas says that the Battle of Badon Hill took place in the year he was born. He does not mention Arthur.¹ Instead, he associates this battle with the figure of Ambrosius Aurelianus, a Roman leader of noble character, as the text states in English translation:²

After a time, when the cruel raiders returned to their home, God strengthened the survivors. Distaught citizens fled to them from different locations, as avidly as bees to the beehive when a storm is overhanging, and with all their hearts implored (...) that they might not be destroyed to the point of extermination. Their leader was a gentleman, Ambrosius Aurelianus, who perhaps alone of the Romans had survived the impact of such a tempest; truly his parents, who had won the purple, were overcome in it. In our times his stocks have degenerated greatly from their excellent grandfather. With him our people regained their strength, challenged the victors to battle and with the Lord acceding the victory fell to us. From then on now our citizens, and then the enemies conquered. (...) This lasted up until the year of the siege of Badon Hill, almost the most recent defeat of the malefactors and certainly not the least. That was the year of my birth; and as I know since then forty-four years and one month have already passed. (Coe and Young 1995: 5)

According to Gildas, Ambrosius Aurelianus is the main leader of the several battles that opposed the British to the English in the late 5th century, although his figure is not known from any other historical source. In the *Excidio*, he appears as a military leader coming from a family of Roman military tribunes (*tribuni militum*), for the text mentions that his family 'had won the purple', perhaps as a reference to a purple band, which was a privilege assigned to senior officers in the Roman legions. However, that same expression may allude to Ambrosius's aristocratic background, since aristocrats also wore a purple band on their clothes to denote their social class. He was then of high birth, his family was Roman and he was

¹ In his *Descriptio Cambriae* (*Description of Wales*), written in 1194, Gerald of Wales gives his opinion about the absence of Arthur from Gildas' work: 'The Britons maintain that, when Gildas criticized his own people so bitterly, he wrote as he did because he was infuriated by the fact that King Arthur had killed his own brother, who was a Scottish chieftain. When he heard of his brother's death, or so the Britons say, he threw into the sea a number of outstanding books which he had written in their praise and about Arthur's achievements. As a result you will find no book which gives an authentic account of that prince.' (Higham 2002: 59)

² Therefore, the Battle of Badon Hill might have taken place in 482. The *Annales Cambriae* (*The Annals of Wales*), written at the end of the 10th century, state that the same battle occurred in 516.

probably a Roman or a Romano-Briton. He was perhaps also a Christian, for Gildas states that he won battles with the help of God. Apparently, he managed to organize an army to fight against the Saxons, whom he defeated though not for long, as the text goes on saying that ‘from then on now our citizens, and then the enemies conquered’. It seems that this was the situation in Gildas’s time, still a troubled period of alternating victories and defeats, the last battle having been fought at Badon Hill where, once more, the British won over the English. We may, then, ask if Ambrosius was their leader. Although the text is not clear about this issue, we can assume that this was the case. If another man had led that conflict, Gildas would have said so. For why would he name Ambrosius and not the man who had played the leading role in ‘the most recent defeat of the malefactors’, as he says? ³

De Excidio Britanniae is an important text because it is the only surviving source for the events that took place during the period known as the Dark Ages in Britain, as it is almost contemporary to the occupation of England by the Anglo-Saxons and to the conflicts that opposed the British to the English.⁴ Therefore, it is still considered one of the best sources of information on the Anglo-Saxons’ arrival into the British Isles, before *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (Ecclesiastical History of the English People) written by Bede two hundred years later, in 731.

Based on Gildas, Bede maintained the idea that the British were a doomed race although he did not refer to the Saxon occupation as a divine punishment. Quite on the contrary, he portrays the English as a chosen people elected by God to defeat the British, whom he depicts as a people alienated from divine Grace with a fate similar to that of fallen angels. His work can be read as praise to the English and it was, in fact, dedicated to the king of Northumbria — Ceolwulf. From Bede’s text onwards, the idea of a common English identity gained strength in Britain, no more a Celtic soil, but an English nation.

Following Gildas’s account of the Battle of Badon Hill, Bede says that it took place forty-four years after the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons into the British Isles, which he believes to have occurred in 449. Hence, the Battle of Badon Hill was fought in 493. He also associates it with Ambrosius Aurelianus.

Hitherto, the records of the Battle of Badon Hill and of the Saxon occupation of England, though sparse, do not differ much. But a few years later, in the 9th century, a change in these records occurs. A different character enters the scene, opening a new page in the book of British history. In 829-30, in Gwynedd (Northern

³ See Padel (1994) and Wood (1999).

⁴ Yet, recently some critics have argued that the historical events that the text narrates may be not so accurate due to its moral tone, as Coe and Young (1995: 2) point out: ‘Even here, where Gildas is describing events in a manner we would usually term historical and chronological it is uncertain how much his account of the recent centuries can be relied upon: first because we cannot be sure of the extent to which the text has been manipulated for the purpose of moral instruction; and second because of his lack of sure knowledge about the recent past’.

Wales), a Welsh monk named Nennius (or Pseudo-Nennius as recent critics suggest),⁵ produced a Latin chronicle about the British people called *Historia Brittonum* (*History of the British*). In it, he too refers to the famous Battle of Badon Hill, but instead of relating it to Ambrosius, as Gildas and Bede had done, he says that its leader was Arthur, as we can read in the English translation by Jon Coe and Simon Young (1995: 9):

The twelfth battle was on Mount Badon (*mons Badonicus*) in which nine hundred and sixty men fell from one rally of Arthur's; and no-one brought them low except he; and he showed himself victor in all his battles.

Historia Brittonum is the earliest written record to mention Arthur.⁶ In fact, two excerpts in it are dedicated to Arthurian material: 1) a list of twelve battles against the Saxon invaders, the last one being the Battle of Mount Badon, all of them led and won by Arthur;⁷ 2) a reference to several places in Wales in which strange or miraculous events took place.⁸

In the first excerpt, Arthur is called 'the leader of battles' (*dux bellorum*). This means that he was not yet the king of tradition as we know him now, but a military leader of great prestige who led the Celts against the second wave of Saxon invaders.⁹ From this list of battles, two stand out: the eighth, which was held in the stronghold of Guinnion, where Arthur carried the image of the Virgin Mary on his

⁵ There are several manuscripts containing *Historia Brittonum*. However, the preface including the name Nennius appears only in one of the later versions. The two earliest versions do not contain either the preface or the name of the author. Therefore, the work has been considered anonymous. In spite of this fact, for practical reasons, critics continue to use the name Nennius to refer to the author of the *Historia Brittonum* and the same criterium will be adopted here.

⁶ There is a reference to Arthur in a line of the Welsh poem *Y Gododdin* written by Aneirin around the year 600. Speaking of the courage of Gwaawrddur, the text says 'He would feed black ravens on the wall / of a fortress, though he were not Arthur.' (Coe and Young, 1995: 154). This poem, from the 7th century, could have been the first text to mention Arthur, but the line might be a later interpolation, perhaps of the tenth or eleventh century. There is also a poem ascribed to Taliesin which mentions Arthur, saying: 'the battle of Badon with Arthur, chief giver of feasts... the battle which all men remember' ('giver of feasts' meaning supreme leader). But although Taliesin lived in the 6th century, several poems attributed to him belong to a later date, postdating *Historia Brittonum*.

⁷ See Appendix I for the list of the battles.

Some critics have suggested that the rhyming of some of the battle's names reveal that the list was based on an old Welsh poem. However, it has recently been argued that there are other battles mentioned in Nennius' work that are clearly legendary however devoid of rhyming scheme. This means that the source of the twelve battle list may have not been an old Welsh poem at all.

⁸ See Appendix II for the *mirabilia*.

⁹ Arthur will become king in subsequent texts, namely in *Historia Regum Britanniae*, a work written in 1136 by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who will also give him a genealogy.

shoulders, thus putting the pagans to flight; and the twelfth, in Mount Badon, where he single-handedly and in only one raid, defeated 960 Saxons.¹⁰

In the excerpt about the marvellous episodes related to Arthur (known as *mirabilia*), the author says that in the region of Buellt there is a stone on top of which one can see the footprint of Arthur's dog — Cafall. That footprint was left there when Arthur and Cafall were hunting the pig Troynt.¹¹ If any man tries to carry the stone away from that region, it mysteriously finds its way back to its original location the next day.¹² The other piece of *mirabilia* is related to the region of Erging, where there is a grave that contains the body of Amr, Arthur's son, killed by his own father. This grave never shows the same length each time it is measured. Throughout the passage, Arthur is referred to as a soldier (*Arthuri militis*) and, as before mentioned, not yet as a king.

Some critics defend that these two passages speak of two different Arthurs, since one is apparently a pseudo-historical figure associated with battles, and the other a character who seems to find his origins in legend. On the other hand, when Nennius calls this second Arthur a soldier (*Arthuri militis*), he might be referring to the leader of battles (*dux bellorum*) of the first passage. Is there more than one Arthur in *Historia Brittonum*? It seems to us that the Arthur mentioned in the text is one and the same. In fact, the mythical and legendary attributes of Arthur become more evident in the *mirabilia* excerpt, though we cannot say that they are absent from the list of battles. In fact, if the eighth Battle of Guinnion bears witness to Arthur's faith, the last one shows that he had an enormous physical strength. Thus, although pseudo-historical, the list of battles gains a mythical dimension and Arthur clearly acquires a legendary aura as well.

We can say that *Historia Brittonum* sets the pattern of Arthurian tradition and literature by merging both historical and legendary aspects in the figure of Arthur. From the very beginning, they are inextricable, which makes it impossible, in the absence of reliable historical records, to prove that Arthur was a real historical figure or, contrariwise, a totally mythical hero.¹³ Although this issue continues to seduce

¹⁰ According to some critics, Arthur did not carry the image of the Virgin on his shoulders. Instead, he carried a shield showing the image of the Virgin in one of its sides, as Gawain will do in the poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Apparently, the author of *Historia Brittonum* misread the Welsh word *ysgwydd* (shield) of his source, writing it as *ysgwd* (shoulder). In Welsh tradition, it was common for warriors to carry shields with images engraved on them.

¹¹ *Historia Brittonum* is the earliest source for the great hunting of the boar Twrch Trwyth that will be one of the central motifs of the Welsh tale of *The Mabinogion – Culhwch and Olwen*. This tale is, in turn, considered the first Arthurian text written in vernacular. In *Historia*, the tale of the great boar hunt still has a mythical resonance, for it refers to a hero named bear who chases a boar with the help of a dog named horse (see note 16).

¹² This legend is associated with Carn Gaffalt – a hill in the upper valley of the Wye, in Wales. Apparently, it explains how the top of the hill resembles a saddle.

¹³ Cf. Padel (2000)

everyone with an interest in the figure of Arthur, in this paper we mainly intend to reflect on something else. Why does Nennius replace the name of Ambrosius Aurelianus by that of Arthur, promoting the latter to the status of national hero? Why does he introduce a new character who is totally absent from the works of his predecessors, thus creating, knowingly or not, the most emblematic figure of English medieval culture and literature?

It may be that the period between Gildas and Nennius witnessed the appearance of a figure in Welsh tradition that would finally become a hero in the written pages of *Historia Brittonum*. However, the question remains: why did it happen in the context within which the hero Ambrosius already existed?

Some critics have tried to identify Ambrosius with Arthur, claiming that they are the same character. If Nennius replaced the name of Ambrosius by that of Arthur, they say, it was because the latter was more popular and had more prestige in Britain at the time. However, the proper name Arthur is unfamiliar to the Welsh genealogies and, therefore, it was not common or famous. The reason has to lie elsewhere.

In *King Arthur, Myth-Making and History*, N. J. Higham (2002) believes that the main cause for the appearance of Arthur in *Historia Brittonum* is mainly political and ideological, and not devoid of a providential tone. When Nennius writes *Historia Brittonum* in the 9th century, there is a general understanding among the Welsh *élites* that they have a past and an identity quite distinct from that of the English — a Celtic past and a British identity. But the previous works of Gildas and Bede had, as we saw, deprived the British of their own distinctiveness. Nennius aims, then, at recovering the idea of Britishness and rebuilding British identity (as opposed to the English and to the Roman). At the same time, he is also reinstating his compatriots into their rightful place within the history of salvation, proclaiming that the British are a people of the Lord endowed with a providential history, and not an ignorant race similar to that of the Israelites, who had disobeyed the Lord and who, for that reason, were severely punished. As Higham says:

Investment in 'British' identity was a fundamental part of political and cultural resistance to English conquest and Anglicization, and marks the commitment of the élite [the Welsh élite] to such resistance.(...) (Higham 2002: 9)
 (...) Thereafter (...) élite groups keen to confront the Anglicizing colonial process sought to reinforce their historical mythology by providing heroic icons supportive of both virtuous leadership and military reputation, in contradiction to Gildas's polemic (...) (Higham 2002: 95)

By replacing Ambrosius by Arthur, Nennius is, indeed, introducing a hero who is a Celt (not a Roman or an English), a compatriot who stands out not only due to his military prowess but also because he has qualities that supersede the human. In Gildas, nothing is said about Ambrosius that can turn him into a legendary hero. Although a gentlemen of high birth, he is merely a leader of battles like so many others. However, by giving Arthur a superhuman strength and by associating him

to miraculous events, the author of *Historia Brittonum* provides the British with a hero that no one can rival, the man they craved for at a time of despair, the only one who could save them.

Arthur is introduced after Vortigern's death, which marks the end of a catastrophic government, responsible for the Saxon occupation. Arthur's appearance in the text at this point stands as a symbol of hope representing a moment of renewal — the triumph of the British, no longer a weak people but a race of brave warriors. Then it was that the magnanimous Arthur, with all the kings and military force of Britain, fought against the Saxons. And though there were many more noble than himself, yet he was twelve times chosen their commander, and was often the conqueror.

Immediately after this passage, the twelve battles are listed. All of them reveal Arthur not only as a mighty war leader. He grows into the status of a Christian warrior (thus opposed to the pagan Vortigern) — a fellow countryman, a leader of people who contributes to the redefinition of Britain as the Promised Land, the new Jerusalem, offering the British a place in heaven in the Last Judgement.

Arthur is, then, a messianic figure, a Christian warrior who acts with the support of God and the Virgin, thus proving that the Lord had not abandoned the British, as Gildas or Bede had claimed. By making him the victor of the Battle of Mount Badon, as well as the champion of all the other eleven battles, Nennius is forging a true national hero who not only stands as a symbol of British resistance against the English, but who also nurtures the feeling of union among the British. Moreover, by introducing the figure of Arthur in a work that claims to be historical, Nennius is also shaping, or reshaping, British history. In this sense, he presents Vortigern as a coward, immoral and weak king who invites the Saxons into Britain. He depicts the Saxons as cruel traitors and portrays the British as a strong and brave race that resists invasion with nobility and strength. He goes further in inventing a genealogy for the British people, thus forging a foundation myth. He claims that the origins of the British can be found in a time previous to the building of Rome, their lineage, thus, being as ancient as that of the Romans, though the island of Britain derives its name from Brutus. In fact, Brutus governed the land at the time of the high-priest Eli and the Ark of the Covenant. Nennius is then mixing classical myth and history with the story of the Old Testament, so that the British can be seen as one of the peoples of the Lord, walking the path of salvation.

By merging human and superhuman qualities into the figure of Arthur, the author of *Historia Brittonum* is creating a hero out of legend, a figure that would forever remain in the memory of the British people. If Higham is right, then two more questions remain. Firstly, why would Nennius want to recuperate British pride? And, secondly, where did he come across the name 'Arthur'?

Historia Brittonum was written during the government of Merfyn — King of the British — and may have been dedicated to him. In the text, again in the translation offered by the site of Fordham University (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/nennius-full.asp>), the Jesuit University of New York, it is stated:

This history therefore has been compiled (...) in the 858th year of our Lord's incarnation, and in the 24th year of Mervin, king of the Britons, and I hope that the prayers of my betters will be offered up for me in recompense of my labour.

In the 9th century, the country of Wales was fighting a war against the Mercian kingdom of the Saxon heptarchy that was trying to conquer British territory. Merfyn was the Welsh king who could save his people from this fate. Nennius is then appealing to his compatriots to avoid internal conflicts and unite so that the Welsh, under Merfyn, can defeat the Saxons. Arthur is therefore, a possible face of the Welsh king, here understood as the national Messiah who would save his homeland.¹⁴

Behind the emergence of Arthur as leader of the Battle of Mount Badon and hero of the British people there is a historical, as well as a political and ideological goal. In this sense, the author of *Historia Brittonum* is only starting what others have done over the centuries: using the figure of Arthur to promote their ideas, be they political, artistic, ideological or others. That was the case, for instance, of *Historia Regum Britanniae*, where Geoffrey of Monmouth intended to please the Norman monarchs who commissioned the book. He creates then a genealogical history for Arthur, turning him into a king, in order to glorify the British past from which the Normans supposedly descended through King Arthur. Geoffrey is also legitimizing the Norman government by placing Arthur at the level of Roland, thus giving the Normans a hero that would rival and supersede the symbol of French monarchy.

Our second question was: where did Arthur come from? For many critics, the name Arthur derives from the Roman personal name Artorius (Lucius Artorius Castus), but soon it was woven into British folklore and topography, originating several local oral stories that were probably known by Nennius, as Higham (2002: 97) emphasizes:

The most plausible conclusion is, therefore, that the historicized Arthur of the central Middle Ages had his roots in a Roman *Artorius* who had been taken up and developed within British folk stories already widespread by the beginning of the ninth century.

In these stories, Arthur appears to be a giant-like figure, who loves hunting in the dense forests and who possesses a superhuman strength. Authors, as Oliver Padel, have stressed the association of Arthur to British topography and to such places as 'King Arthur's Chair' or 'King Arthur's Bed' in Cornwall, 'King Arthur's

¹⁴ Let us recall that, in the impossibility of readapting the figure of Ambrosius to his nationalistic purposes, Nennius turns Ambrosius into Emrys – a soothsayer– like figure who unveils the mystery of the two dragons – the red dragon and the white dragon – fighting underneath Vortigern's tower. They respectively represent the conflict between the British and the English forces. In the end, the red dragon defeats the white dragon, driving it away to the sea from where it had come. So, Merfyn, as Arthur, has also mythical qualities, since he has come to fulfil a prophecy.

Round Table' in Cumbria, and 'Arthur's Stone' in Herefordshire.¹⁵ They have also suggested that Arthur's name is a combination of the words < arto >, meaning 'bear' and < wiros >, meaning 'man' or 'husband'. Besides, the word < arth > was commonly used in Old Welsh poetry to describe warriors. That is the case of poems such as *Y Gododdin* and *Armes Prydein*, where the bear is a symbol of boldness, power and ferocity. The same happens in Anglo-Saxon poetry, namely in *Beowulf*, where the hero's name, as Professor J.R.R. Tolkien has pointed out, means 'one who seeks honey' (Bee-Wolf), which is a metaphor for bear. In fact, the bear is an animal known for its great strength and its skills in hunting and fishing. It prefers to wander alone in isolated landscapes of wild and remote forests. These characteristics also apply to Arthur in medieval Welsh literature, as we can see in the poem *Pa Gur* or in the tale *Culhwch and Olwen*.¹⁶ Therefore, it is only natural that in medieval literature a hero of superhuman power were compared to this animal.¹⁷

In this study about the possible reasons for Arthur to appear in *Historia Brittonum* in the role formerly assigned to Ambrosius Aurelianus we would also like to stress our belief that Arthur was, most certainly, in his origin, a mythical hero already known in the Welsh folklore, endowed with military attributes so as to match his superhuman qualities. In this sense, we diverge a little from Higham's position that Arthur is firstly associated with the historical Artorius and only afterwards merged into the local folklore. In our opinion, Nennius was possibly driven by local stories of a bear-man of enormous strength, a giant associated with the topography of Wales.¹⁸ If he later had the Roman Artorius in mind when he decided to give his warlord the name of Arthur we do not know, since this name already carried mythical connotations, as we mentioned. However, it seems plausible to us that this mythological Arthur has primacy over the historical one, who perhaps never existed. By substituting Ambrosius by Arthur in his history of the British people, Nennius was deliberately forging a true national champion, not only a *dux bellorum*, a leader of battles, but also creating a figure that comes out of the world of myth into the realm of the imagination: Arthur, the mighty warrior who, at the same time, is a mythical figure connected to British landscape — a folk hero

¹⁵ These places testify the fact that Arthur was possibly a giant in British folklore, an idea also implicit in *Historia Brittonum* when it is stated that Arthur was capable of moving massive stones and that his dog was called Cabal — an animal the size of a horse (from <ceffyl> — 'horse' in Modern Welsh).

¹⁶ For these reasons, Arthur has also been associated to the development of Finn MacCool, the hero of Irish legend, because both are related to the wild hunt and to topography, and both are warriors of mythical qualities who fight for their people.

¹⁷ Contributing to this poetic device may be the decrease in bear population in Britain during the times known as 'Dark period'.

¹⁸ Some authors have claimed that Arthur was originally a bear god but there are no signs of a cult dedicated to bear gods in Britain.

intimately associated with the particular geography of Britain as the *mirabilia* of *Historia Brittonum* evidences. Again, Nennius was interested in presenting a quintessentially British hero whom his compatriots would recognize as theirs. Ambrosius clearly could not fulfil this role.

As to all other details, we are in tune with the opinions expressed by such authors as Michael Wood or Oliver Padel and, more recently, by N. J. Higham, who envisages the writing of history as a political and cultural act. Firstly, by merging myth and history, *Historia Brittonum* gave the medieval world one of his most beloved characters, both human and superhuman. Secondly, the figure of Arthur was used by Nennius for political, ideological, moral, providential and nationalistic reasons, a strategy subsequently followed by numerous authors over the centuries.

By making Arthur the hero of British resistance in *Historia Brittonum*, Nennius gives us the very beginning of the Arthurian myth. He also gives us the genesis of the idea of Arthur which, in Higham's (2002: 3) words, 'has been one of the most persistent and powerful in Western culture over the last millennium, at least, and shows little sign now of abating. It has had successive transformations, each refashioned to conform to the world-picture projected by a particular author writing for a particular *élite* at a particular time.'

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Appendix I

List of Twelve Battles Won by Arthur

In illo tempore Saxones inualescebant in multitudine et crescebant in Brittannia. Mortuo autem Hengisto, Otha filius eius, transiuit de sinistrali parte Britanniae ad regnum Cantorum et de ipso orti sunt reges Cantorum. Tunc Arthur pugnabat contra illos in illis diebus cum regibus Brittonum, sed ipse erat dux bellorum. Primum bellum fuit in ostium fluminis quod dicitur Glein. Secundum et tertium et quartum et quintum super aliud flumen, quod dicitur Dubglas et est in regione Linnuis. Sextum bellum super flumen, quod uocatur Bassas. Septimum fuit bellum in silua Celidonis, id est Cat Coit Celidon. Octauum fuit bellum in castello Guinnion, in quo Arthur portauit imaginem sanctae Mariae perpetuae uirginis super humeros suos et pagani uersi sunt in fugam in illo die et caedes magna fuit super illos per uirtutem Domini nostri Jesu Christi et per uirtutem sanctae Mariae genetricis eius. Nonum bellum gestum est in urbe Legionis. Decimum gessit bellum in litore fluminis, quod uocatur Tribruit. Undecimum factum est bellum in monte, qui dicitur Agned. Duodecimum fuit bellum in monte Badonis, in quo corruerunt in uno die nongenti sexaginta uiri de uno impetu Arthur; et nemo prostrauit eos nisi ipse solus, et in omnibus bellis uictor extitit. Et ipsi, dum in omnibus bellis prosternebantur, auxilium a Germania petebant et augebantur multipliciter sine intermissione et reges a Germania deducebant, ut regnarent super illos in Brittannia usque ad tempus quo Ida regnauit, qui fuit Eobba filius. ipse fuit primus rex in Beornica.

In that time the Saxons increased in numbers and grew strong in Britain. With the death of Hengest, Ohta his son came from the northern part of Britain to the kingdom of the Kentish people, and from this one arose the kings of Kent. At that time Arthur fought against them with the kings of the Britons, for he was the leader of battles. The first battle was in the east at the river that is called Glein. The second, the third, the fourth and the fifth were by another river called Dubglas in the region of Linnuis. The sixth battle was by the river that is named Bassas. The seventh battle was in the wood of Caledonia, that is Cad Coed Celyddon. The eighth battle was in the stronghold of Guinnion, in which Arthur carried the image of Holy Mary, the eternal virgin, upon his shoulders and the pagans were turned around into a rout, and there was a great slaughter of them through the might of our Lord Jesus Christ and through the might of holy Mary, the virgin and his mother. The ninth battle was fought in the City of the Legion. He fought the tenth battle on the bank of the river which is called Tribruit. The eleventh battle was made on the mount that is called Agned. The twelfth battle was on Mount Badon, in which nine hundred and sixty men fell from one rally of Arthur's; and no-one brought them low except he; and he showed himself victor in all his battles. When they were laid low in all the battles, they sought reinforcements from Germany, and augmented themselves considerably without respite, and they brought kings from Germany so that they might reign over them in Britain up to the time when Ida reigned, who was the son of Eobba. That one was the first king in Bernicia.

Appendix II

Mirabilia

Est aliud mirabile in regione quae dicitur Buelt. Est ibi cumulus lapidum et unus lapis superporitus super congestum cum uestigio canis in eo. Quando uenatus est porcum Troynt, impressit Cabal, qui erat canis Arthur militis, uestigium in lapide et Arthur postea congragauit congestum lapidum sub lapide in quo erat uestigium canis sui, et uocatur Carn Cabal. Et ueniunt homines et tollunt lapidem in manibus suis per spatium diei et noctis et in crastino die inuenitu super congestum suum. Est aliud miraculum in region quae uocatur Ercing. Habetur ibi sepulcrum iuxta fontem, qui cognominatur Licat Amr ; et uiri nomen, qui sepultus est in tumulo, sic uocabatur Amr, filius Arthuri militis erat et ipse occidit eum ibidem et sepeliuit. Et ueniunt homines ad mensurandum tumulum in longitudine aliquando sex pedes, aliquando nouem, aliquando duodecim, aliquando quideci ; in qua mensura metieris eum in ista uice, iterum non inuenies eum in una mensura et ego solus probaui.

There is another wonder in the region which is called Buellt. There is a mass of stones and one stone, placed on top of the pile with the footprint of a dog on it. When Cafall, who was the dog of the soldier Arthur, hunted the pig Troynt, he pressed his footprint into a stone, after which Arthur gathered a pile of stones underneath the stone on which was the footprint of the dog, and it was called Carn Cafall. And men come, and carry the stone in their hands for a space of a day and a night, and on the next day the stone is found on the pile.

There is another wonder in the region which is called Erging. A grave is there next to a spring which is called Llygad Amr, and the name of the man who is buried there is Amr the son of Arthur the soldier, and this same one killed him and buried him there. And men come to measure the tomb and it is sometimes six feet long and sometimes nine feet, sometimes twelve, sometimes fifteen. At whatever length you measure it at one time, you will not find it again at the same length and I myself have tested this.

(Coe and Young (1995). *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend*. Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers).